United Nations A/C.1/55/PV.5

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-fifth session

First Committee

5th meeting

Wednesday, 4 October 2000, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 65 to 81 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your accession to the chairmanship. I am convinced that the First Committee of the fifty-fifth session of the Assembly will fully benefit from your qualities, both professional and personal, and that, under your leadership, our work will be crowned with success.

Switzerland attaches great importance to disarmament and arms control efforts. We consider such efforts to be essential for the maintenance of international peace and security. My country is determined to support and to associate itself with all initiatives aimed at bringing tangible and practical results. Switzerland has ratified and implemented completely and unconditionally all multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements. We invite all members of the international community to do the same as soon as possible. Thus, peace and international security as a collective effort will be strengthened and new progress in the field of arms control and disarmament will be made possible. Specifically, Switzerland would like to express its wish that all countries, whose ratification is necessary for the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), ratify this agreement and that all members of the international community accede, without delay and unconditionally, to the Treaty on the Non- Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The realization of true progress in arms control and disarmament negotiations remains difficult to achieve, despite a number of recent positive developments. In this respect, I would like to acknowledge the ratification of START II and of the CTBT by the Russian Federation. We also welcome the fact that the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT was able to adopt, in extremis, a final declaration that is well-balanced and in that final declaration the nuclear-weapon States have notably committed themselves to intensifying their efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament.

However, these positive developments did not result in other more tangible results. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva failed to reach a consensus on its programme of work. There was also uncertainty as to the intentions of the United States with regard to developing and deploying a national missile defence system. Such a decision could lead to negative responses from other States and endanger existing agreements.

We, therefore, welcome the recent decision by the American President to delay the decision to deploy the system. The Swiss Government always expressed itself in favour of an agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation which would take into account not only the bilateral treaty of 1972 to limit

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missile defence systems, but also gives due consideration to the stability of the international strategic security system.

The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is faced with a serious deadlock. Again this year it finished its deliberations without even having been able to initiate concrete negotiations. In spite of the efforts of the various Chairmen of the Conference, for which we are grateful, it was not possible to reach an agreement on a programme of work. For Switzerland, the priority is to initiate negotiations, without preconditions, of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for military purposes. Switzerland is equally ready to deal with the other questions that are still pending and to initiate negotiations on nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as on security guarantees, once the Conference will have defined the precise objective of these negotiations and agreed on their negotiation mandates. Due to the importance and the urgency of a fissile material cut-off treaty for the continuation of the multilateral nuclear disarmament process, it is imperative that the Conference adopt a programme of work early next year.

The documents drawn up by the Chairmen, Ambassador Lint of Belgium and Ambassador Amorim of Brazil, provide a solid basis for a consensus. My country would like to assure the current Chairman, Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria, as well as his successor, Ambassador Westdal of Canada, of its full support in the consultation process that they will undertake.

The Review Conference of the NPT this spring was the occasion to review in detail the state of multilateral disarmament and nuclear proliferation. The debates at the Conference reconfirmed that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain two major issues of international security. Nevertheless, despite the fact that nuclear States subscribed, in the final declaration to more binding commitments, it is necessary to recognize that the nuclear disarmament objectives agreed upon in 1995, which, frankly speaking, are quite modest, were not attained. What counts, in the end, is the concrete implementation without delay of the objectives and principles of the final document of 2000.

With respect to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Switzerland welcomes the recent progress made in the field of industrial inspections and standards for such inspections. We also welcome the agreement on the concentration of mixtures of controlled chemicals. These decisions will reinforce the proliferation pillar of the Convention. Switzerland will pursue its efforts to contribute to finding solutions in this area. Notably, Switzerland has intensified its efforts for more effective implementation of article X in the field of assistance and protection against chemical weapons, thus making a contribution towards the universalization of the Convention. An important problem remains, however, the destruction of chemical weapons. We hope that the recent decision to modify the order of destruction will help the Russian Federation to complete the destruction of its chemical weapons within the time-frame set out by the Convention.

Biological and bacteriological weapons are already banned by the Biological Weapons Convention. Our efforts today consist of completing this Convention and increasing its effectiveness by specific measures. With this objective in mind, Switzerland actively participates in the work of the Ad Hoc Group on biological and bacteriological weapons in Geneva. These negotiations have now entered a crucial phase, the objective of which is to complete them before the Fifth Review Conference takes place in 2001 in Geneva.

As members know, Switzerland would like to host the future biological weapons organization in Geneva. The candidacy of Geneva illustrates the great importance that my country attaches to these negotiations. We will soon submit a concrete and detailed bid. I can assure the Committee here and now that the Swiss offer will be generous, be it with respect to privileges and immunities or with respect to its financial offer. My country's authorities will take all necessary measures so that this new organization can be established in Geneva without delay and benefit from optimal working conditions, as well as take advantage of the excellent international infrastructure of the city.

The millennium report of the Secretary-General emphasizes the importance of the protection of civilian populations and of individuals. The protection of the human being is at the very heart of his security concept. Indeed, we must concentrate our efforts on promoting human security. In this context, the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light

weapons represent a complex problem necessitating urgent measures. The excessive accumulation of and illicit trade in such weapons not only threaten peace and security in many regions of the world, but also endanger their social and economic development. Switzerland participates actively in the endeavours to address this problem. My country welcomes the decision of the United Nations to organize in 2001 the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and has offered to host it in Geneva. We are ready to cover the cost difference between Geneva and New York and to make the necessary resources available in order to guarantee full participation in the Conference.

This Conference will be a crucial event for the development, reinforcement and coordination of the efforts of the international community against the excessive accumulation of and illicit trade in small arms. Switzerland wishes to contribute actively to the various efforts undertaken to guarantee the success of this Conference. At the first session of the Preparatory Committee, France and Switzerland distributed a focus paper on a possible international legal instrument on the marking, recording and tracing of small arms. The objective of such a convention should be to improve the monitoring and control of the flows of small arms. Our two Governments propose to include in the plan of action of the Conference a number of principles and objectives for a future convention on the marking, recording and tracing of small arms. In this context, Switzerland and France plan to organize, early next year in Geneva, a workshop on marking that will be open to all interested parties.

It goes without saying that the marking of small arms must be accompanied by other measures of transparency and control, as well as by reduction measures in the context of post-conflict reconstruction. My country intends to pursue its efforts in this area and notably to organize next year a second workshop on better security and monitoring of stocks of small arms and light weapons.

Finally, Switzerland initiated a project for the publication of a yearbook on small arms and light weapons. A number of other States have associated themselves with this project. The first volume of this small arms survey, which will be published early next year, will not only be a reference document for the international Conference, but will also provide evidence of the advantages of a partnership between Governments, non-governmental organizations and the academic world.

The Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction took place from 11 to 15 September in Geneva. This Meeting allowed us to make further progress with respect to the implementation of the Convention and to increase the awareness of States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations on the urgency of the ban of anti-personnel mines. The efforts to make the landmine Convention universal are well advanced, 138 States having signed it and 107 having ratified it. Nevertheless, much remains to be done. A number of major States have not yet adhered to the Convention. We must redouble our efforts with a view to promoting the universalization of the Convention. In this context, and in order to facilitate ratification by countries having to destroy stocks of anti-personnel mines after their accession to the Convention, Switzerland has offered to train specialists in the destruction of anti-personnel mines.

My country welcomes the recent progress made in the framework of the intersessional process that took place at the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and, with a view to the next annual meeting of States parties in Managua, invites all countries to contribute actively to this process.

The other important instrument in the field of conventional weapons is the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. The 2001 Review Conference will allow an evaluation of the implementation of the Convention and of its Protocols and an examination of the technical and other developments that would allow the reduction of the excessive, injurious or indiscriminate effects of some conventional weapons. In this respect, Switzerland grants particular importance to the problem of cluster bombs and of other non-exploded munitions. Switzerland is ready to support the drafting of additional protocols. In order to prepare and support the Review Conference in this area, a group of experts should be established. Finally, by its humanitarian tradition, Switzerland has increased its efforts to identify methods to reduce the suffering of gunshot

victims. My country intends to organize a third workshop on ballistic wounds next year in Switzerland.

If we weigh the results of arms control and disarmament efforts over the past 12 months, we note that progress in the field of weapons of mass destruction has been disappointing, while the efforts of the international community to protect civilian populations and individuals from the dangerous effects or the indiscriminate use of certain conventional weapons, such as antipersonnel mines or small arms and light weapons, developed genuine momentum. Switzerland welcomes the fact that due international attention is being given to the humanitarian aspect of arms control and to the protection of civilian populations, which is in perfect harmony with what is commonly called the "spirit of Geneva".

Nevertheless, these developments will be in vain if the major Powers and other States do not step up their efforts and strive for a complete, total and verifiable elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. To my country, the efforts of the United Nations in the field of nuclear disarmament, notably the negotiations of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, are essential elements of the maintenance of international security and stability.

Mr. Keita (Mali) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I wish at the outset to congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I take this opportunity to assure you of my delegation's full support in the fulfilment of your onerous and lofty tasks.

I wish to thank Mr. Dhanapala for his edifying remarks at the opening of the debate.

At the dawn of the third millennium one of the most urgent tasks confronting humanity is to free the world from the fear of weapons of mass destruction and from the menace of small arms. In Abuja, Nigeria, two years ago the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted a Moratorium with regard to such weapons in response to a Malian initiative to tackle their proliferation and their impact on African development programmes. Since that time, African States and various international and non-governmental organizations have initiated several focused yet complementary actions to seek political strategies to control the illicit movement and possession of these arms by civilian populations. In this regard, it is worth recalling once again the implementation by ECOWAS of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), a mechanism created to coordinate all the priority activities that have been identified and implemented to achieve the Moratorium's objectives.

As the representative of the country that is currently chairing ECOWAS, I would like to tell the Committee of some steps in the area of disarmament that have been made in the subregion. In December 1999 the heads of State adopted decision 12/99 committing all the member States to create national commissions to fight the proliferation of small arms. In Mali the commission has already initiated an arms-for-development project in Timbuktu; a country-wide public information and awareness programme which is being aided by Belgian technical cooperation; an arms register and the safeguarding of the national arsenal; border controls to combat, with neighbouring countries, arms-trafficking and cross-border banditry; and workshops for the members of the national commission and representatives of civil society to strengthen and control information technology, education and communication.

In Guinea-Bissau, PCASED, the United Nations Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the United Nations Office in Bissau — in collaboration with national authorities and representatives of civil society — have developed an arms-collection project to provide financing for development projects. The project has been submitted to the United Nations and other sources of funds.

In Niger, with the support of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, a *Flamme de la Paix* ceremony, modelled on the one in Mali, was organized, and there was a similar ceremony in Liberia.

Since the new regime came to power in Senegal, the Government is committed to resolving with its neighbours, Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia, the issue of the rebellion in Casamance.

Ghana — in addition to holding a workshop to prepare for the registration of small arms and of stocks of commodities in Accra — in April 2000 hosted the African conference on children affected by war.

At the end of this month Mali will host the regional conference on small arms.

As for the Mano River Union, it brings together three countries — Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone — facing security problems that gravely affect political relationships and social projects in these three States. The actions being taken by these States that face profound social crises could help lead the way for the various initiatives to address the proliferation of small arms in the subregion.

Mali, which is fully involved in the actions under way to curb the scourge of small arms proliferation, would like to make an appeal for coordinated and increased support for the regional efforts in this field, namely support for the moratoriums, respect for the embargoes on arms deliveries and strengthening of controls. The year 2001 United Nations conference on this issue will give the international community an opportunity to take the appropriate steps to put an end to the excessive stockpiling of such weapons. It must address all the aspects of this problem, and stress transparency in particular.

The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime, the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the signing and ratification of many other treaties on important aspects of disarmament, and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones: these events make an important contribution to confidence-building, including nuclear disarmament. The international community must spare no effort to achieve universalization of the NPT, which remains the foundation for nuclear disarmament. Mali asks States that have not yet adhered to the NPT to do so in the interest of the whole international community.

Today the issue of disarmament is attracting great interest throughout the world and in Africa in particular. We must capitalize on this situation to move forward with the disarmament programme on all levels, from weapons of mass destruction to small arms and light weapons. To this end, the member States of ECOWAS affirm their determination to contribute to the consolidation of peace and international security by preventing the excessive stockpiling, proliferation and utilization of small arms and light weapons in the subregion, in order to create a propitious climate for socio-economic development.

Mr. Holum (United States of America): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the first First Committee session of the new millennium. You can count on the United States delegation to support your efforts for a productive session.

In past appearances here I have talked about where the international community should be headed, and updated the Committee on the progress that the United States has made in meeting our shared arms control and non-proliferation objectives. Now, as my tenure comes to an end, we can look back with some pride at many steps to advance these goals.

Of paramount importance to all of us is constraining the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The United States has participated actively in a range of regimes. We have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, and we continue strongly to support the Geneva negotiations to develop a compliance protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention.

With respect to nuclear disarmament, we too would like to see more done, and faster. But we are on track. The United States and Russia have destroyed about 25,000 nuclear weapons in the last decade and agreed that START III should take us 80 per cent below the level of strategic weapons deployed a decade ago.

In the United States we have reduced our stockpile of strategic nuclear weapons by nearly 50 per cent, and other types of nuclear weapons by 80 per cent. We have taken our heavy bombers off alert, and our strategic forces are not targeted on any country. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has reduced the number of nuclear weapons for its sub-strategic forces in Europe by more than 85 per cent, and the reaction time of the remaining dual-capable aircraft is now measured in weeks, rather than minutes.

The United States worked with the international community to extend indefinitely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Just since last spring's NPT Review Conference, we and Russia have agreed to a broad initiative to promote further cooperation on strategic stability; intensified discussions on START III and on strengthening and preserving the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty; taken steps towards establishing a joint data exchange centre to exchange data for early warning; and agreed to dispose of 68 tonnes — 34 tonnes each — of weapon-grade plutonium withdrawn from nuclear weapon programmes in ways that will preclude its future use for weapons.

Over the longer term, the United States has spent more than $3 billion to help Russia and others eliminate more than 500 missiles and bombers, and to ensure that nuclear materials are safe and secure. We have also worked with these countries to place excess fissile material under international monitoring, and to transform irreversibly excess fissile material into forms unusable for weapons. The United States has itself removed 226 tons of fissile material from its military stockpile.

We worked with Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus to help persuade those States to give up nuclear weapons entirely. We negotiated with North Korea to avert that country's withdrawal from the NPT and freeze its production of plutonium. We are also encouraged by North Korea's continued adherence to a missile flight testing moratorium.

The United States will continue to support nuclear-weapon-free zones to advance non-proliferation and regional security objectives. We have ratified the Latin America protocols and signed the African and South Pacific protocols. Along with the States parties to the Latin American Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the number of non-nuclear-weapon States eligible for legally binding negative security assurances from all five nuclear-weapon States is now almost 100.

And the United States demonstrated its commitment to ending for all time nuclear explosive testing by being the first to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This has allowed us to participate fully in international efforts to prepare for the Treaty's eventual entry into force. With the wise and effective counsel of the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, we are exploring with members of the United States Senate how we can build support for the CTBT's ratification. In the meantime, the United States will continue to adhere to its moratorium on nuclear explosive testing.

The First Committee has often met after some seminal event that seemed to offer an opportunity for multilateral arms control progress. In 1995, for example, we were optimistic that the indefinite extension of the NPT would provide impetus to progress on multilateral arms control. The successful CTBT negotiations validated those hopes.

Now we convene just a few months after this year's highly successful NPT Review Conference, which many had predicted would be acrimonious and divisive. Some had predicted the worst; indeed, it was suggested that the future viability of the Treaty itself was in question. But NPT parties demonstrated to all the world what can be accomplished when we put common security interests first. Secretary of State Albright proved prescient when she noted on 24 April that together the parties to the NPT can help build a world that is safer and more secure for all peoples.

Under the wise and patient leadership of Ambassador Abdallah Baali of Algeria, we worked through our differences and made the NPT Conference a success. The United States had hoped that the exemplary cooperation of the Review Conference would carry over to other areas, such as the Biological Weapons Convention protocol negotiations and the Conference on Disarmament. So far this has not happened.

It is now seven years since the General Assembly adopted its consensus resolution supporting negotiations on a treaty to end the production of fissile material for nuclear explosives, and five years since a mandate for those negotiations was agreed. This consensus was reaffirmed by all the international community only two years ago at the 1998 session of the First Committee and by all NPT States parties just last May at the NPT Review Conference.

Had the Conference on Disarmament begun fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations five years ago, or even if it had picked up where it left off in 1998, when negotiations briefly began, the negotiations might very well have been completed by now. Many members of the Committee would be demanding next steps, and they would be standing on firm ground. Now such demands get lost in the ether. There is little incentive to consider other proposals for multilateral nuclear arms control, absent progress on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Yet some Conference on Disarmament States continue to thwart the efforts of one President after another to find common ground, despite the fact that the United States has made it clear that we are prepared to accept a Conference programme of work that would establish a subsidiary body to deal with the nuclear disarmament question.

Some Conference States are demanding that the Conference undertake outer space arms control negotiations as the price for moving ahead with the fissile material cut-off treaty, even though there is no

arms race in space and the 1967 Outer Space Treaty prohibits the stationing of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. Those States that point to our national missile defence initiative as justifying Conference negotiations on outer space — including, ironically, some whose proliferation practices helped to make national missile defence a priority in the first place — need to come down to earth. Our national missile defence plans do not envisage activities that contravene existing constraints on the placement of weapons in outer space, including those in the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

On 1 September President Clinton announced that he would leave a decision on deploying national missile defence to his successor. This was a difficult choice, and the right one. We will use this time to meet with our friends around the world to elaborate on why we believe there is a genuine need for national missile defence, and that national missile defence as we envisage it will not threaten, but will strengthen, strategic stability. But, most important for this body, and for the Conference on Disarmament in particular, is that now there are simply no more excuses for delaying Conference action. It is time to get fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations under way.

The United States continues to see countering the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction as a top priority. For five years now the international community has worked hard to strengthen the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which outlaws the development, acquisition and stockpiling of bacteriological agents and toxins as weapons of war. Much has been achieved in the Geneva negotiations to address the many issues that need to be tackled if we are to strengthen the BWC. And we must not falter — no effort should be spared in addressing the security implications of these issues. Right now, however, there is no shared view among the participants in the BWC negotiations over what the focus of the protocol should be or what it should actually accomplish.

The negotiations are bogged down, when they should be finding solutions that improve the security of all participants. We must, for example, improve transparency, through relevant and meaningful declarations and through on-site activity. But the negotiations cannot be allowed to hamper the ability of any State to defend against those that would ignore the international norm against biological weapons, nor to rob any of us of our ability to make progress in biotechnology for the benefit of all mankind. And we must not divert these negotiations onto a course that would undermine already working non-proliferation instruments. The United States will not allow that to happen.

One wonders how the international community can have so much success in some forums and so little in others. At times we have proven adept at putting common security interests first, but at other times some States' positions have hardened in favour of unrealistic objectives that block progress and obscure our focus on the bigger picture.

We achieve our common goals only through cooperation. The CWC, the CTBT negotiations and the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences all testify to what we can do when we work for a common purpose, while exercising our sovereign right to determine for ourselves those policies that would strengthen our national security. But sometimes the security dimension of multilateral arms control seems forgotten; the common ground between collective and sovereign security eludes us. Unrealistic expectations thwart commonsense approaches that could advance our mutual goals. Multilateral arms control becomes a "zero sum" struggle among competing economic or political interests, instead of a "plus sum" endeavour in which all States gain security.

Together, we need to move forward and build on the good will generated at the NPT Review Conference. For our part, we take seriously the horizon for a fissile material cut-off treaty referred to in the NPT Review Conference Final Document. We want to conclude fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations within five years. We will continue to do all we can to pursue further steps in the nuclear disarmament process. And on the basis of the NPT Review Conference Final Document, we must look for other areas of progress as well.

I have focused today on two elements of what last year I referred to as a "renewed agenda". Certainly we can look for new areas where our interests coincide. But we will never reach the top of the ladder if we stumble on the lower steps. We have a broad arms control agenda awaiting completion, not only the fissile material cut-off treaty and the BWC protocol, but strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency, improving fissile material controls and transparency, addressing small arms proliferation, promoting

regional confidence-building measures and negotiating in the Conference on Disarmament a ban on the transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

Despite many serious and long-standing differences, the working relationship among the participants in the NPT Review Conference made it possible to strengthen the NPT even further. Now all of us, together, must follow through on the important conclusions detailed in the Final Document of the Review Conference. Let us summon the spirit of cooperation that guided us through the Conference, and let us work together to advance our common interests in a safer, more stable world. Let us make the first few years of the new millennium even better than the final few years of the last.

Mr. Martynov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Let me begin, Mr. Chairman, by congratulating you on your election to your important post. We are particularly pleased that the representative of a country that has taken important positions on complex issues of international peace and security and disarmament will be guiding our work at this session. We are certain that, with your guidance, we will be able to achieve much-needed compromise in resolving the issues on the agenda of the First Committee. You may rely on the support of the delegation of Belarus.

In the view of Belarus, international peace, security and disarmament are not something we expect to be given free of charge. We have always seen international peace, security and disarmament as areas in which we must make our own contribution. For us this is not a matter of abstract principle, but of practical action to contribute to a common cause.

It is customary to look back when crossing the threshold of a new era, and I wish therefore to mention two points. First of all, my country made the unprecedented sacrifice of one third of its population — the lives of its finest sons and daughters — to bring about the common victory of the united nations over the Nazis in the Second World War. Then, when the collapse of the Soviet Union threatened the simultaneous collapse of control over the nuclear arsenals of that super-Power and the emergence of four new nuclear-weapon States in place of one, Belarus was the first to declare its unconditional renunciation of that nuclear arsenal and unconditionally to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Nuclear proliferation in the post-Soviet area was prevented.

The year 2000 has been an important one in terms of further practical contributions by Belarus to strengthening regional and global security. Belarus acceded to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and became the first nation in the world to ratify the Agreement on the Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which had been signed less then a year before at Istanbul. Belarus became a full member of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, one of the key international export control regimes. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank all the members of that group for their support. This year, Belarus served as a President of the Conference on Disarmament, and did its best to help find a way out of the stalemate there. And prior to the current session of the General Assembly, Belarus deposited its instruments of ratification of the CTBT and of Protocol IV to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects on blinding laser weapons.

As we enter the third millennium, we must all make every effort to create a safe world for all the Members of the United Nations. We consider therefore that the Organization should continue to focus its efforts and its attention on reducing the nuclear threat and eliminating the destabilizing imbalance in the field of the conventional weapons. That was the very approach that was demonstrated this year at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, at which participants adopted a programme of further steps in nuclear disarmament and reaffirmed the principles and goals of nuclear non-proliferation.

The increase in the number of NPT participant States to 187 and the ratification of the CTBT by many key nations testify to the consistent policies of those States in the field of nuclear security. Belarus is convinced that just and legally binding guarantees must be extended to all non-nuclear-weapon States. Each of those States has made a well-considered contribution to stability and international security by renouncing the nuclear option.

We are convinced also of the significance for the nuclear non-proliferation regime of prohibiting the

production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons purposes, and we urge a start of negotiations on that issue.

The strengthening of common security at the international level needs to be complemented by regional efforts, which increase the effectiveness of universal arms control and confidence-building measures. We remain convinced that the initiative put forward by the Republic of Belarus to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe would be in the interest both of European security and of global security, as well as in the long-term interest of all European States. We must not lose the historic opportunity provided by the geopolitical transformations of the early 1990s. The withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the territory of the region, to which I have already referred, and the current nuclear-weapon-free status of Eastern and Central European States should be consolidated through legally binding commitments. It is obvious that such a joint undertaking would provide a strong impetus for setting up a genuine security system for the entire European family of nations. Naturally, it is equally clear to us that present-day political factors would make it difficult for the majority of our European partners to accept such a proposal. In that connection, the Belarus delegation intends to continue to seek consensus on this issue, at the current session and elsewhere.

We are fully convinced that a key factor of security is the necessity to preserve strategic parity and the existing balance of power in the world. In this connection, the preservation of and compliance with the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems is a logical basis for maintaining global stability. Any violation of the latter could lead to a very dangerous demolition of the entire architecture of existing international agreements. We are therefore speaking once again at this session of the General Assembly as one of the sponsors of the anti-ballistic missile resolution.

Transparency in disarmament issues is a basis for confidence-building among States and one of the core elements of the implementation of existing disarmament and non-proliferation regimes both with respect to conventional and nuclear weapons. It should be noted that Belarus presents on a regular basis the required information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and fully implements its obligation of submitting annual information in accordance with the requirements of other non-proliferation regimes.

Along with nuclear weapons, other types of weapons of mass destruction pose no lesser danger and require our constant attention. The entry into force of the Conventions banning chemical and biological weapons is a major step forward in eliminating this lethal threat to mankind. We hope for further steps in that direction by finalizing the negotiations on the verification Protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Besides the elimination of existing weapons of mass destruction, preventing the development of new types continues to be vitally important. As a matter of principle Belarus is convinced of the necessity to establish a control mechanism to prevent the development of new types of weapons of mass destruction. This is certainly a much cheaper and more adequate method to follow than creating arsenals of new types of such weapons only to eliminate them later. The proposals advanced by Belarus on this issue are based on the preventive approach, now the focal point of United Nations attention and hopes. It would be unwise at the outset to create a monster only to try to tame it later on. History has vividly demonstrated how unproductive and dangerous that turn of events could be. The development of new approaches and new solutions, including in the area of nuclear disarmament, the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction and the development of new types of such weapons should become the key objective of the fourth special session on disarmament.

In my statement today I have touched upon the topic of geopolitical transformations in Europe in the early 1990s. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate the German delegation on celebrating yesterday the tenth anniversary of the reunification of the country, which became possible as a result of these changes. In its turn German reunification proved a major contributing factor to the strengthening of security and good neighbourly relations in Europe.

Finally, I would like to express our hope that in the twenty-first century mankind will manage to finally rid the planet of all weapons of mass destruction. It would only be appropriate to that end to elaborate and

implement a code of peace, mutual trust and security as a universal basis for interaction and cooperation among nations and States in the spirit of mutual respect and the search for solutions to contentious issues by exclusively peaceful means.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I am very pleased to see you steering this important Committee, Mr. Chairman, and I am convinced that you will do so to the satisfaction of all. The Algerian delegation would like to convey its warmest congratulations to you and to the other members of the Bureau and to assure you of our readiness and full cooperation to contribute to the success of our work.

I would also like to pay a special tribute to your predecessor, my friend Mr. Raimundo González of Chile, for the remarkable way he led the work of this Committee at the last session.

I would also like to warmly thank Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General of Disarmament Affairs, for his dedication to cause of disarmament, as well as my compatriot, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, who will soon retire after an active life devoted entirely to disarmament.

Our work is taking place following the Millennium Summit, which will have been a turning point for all the peoples of the world and the Organization that brings us together in that it will have offered, among other things, the leaders of the world the opportunity to make a solemn commitment to spare no effort to deliver mankind from the scourge of war and to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction.

Their powerful message has supported historic results, on which a draft resolution will be introduced by Algeria, results which were obtained at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Weapons (NPT), during which for the first time nuclear States committed themselves unequivocally to proceed to the complete elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

Now that this commitment has been publicly made, it must be followed up by implementation and we must all ensure that this will be the case. We must also make efforts to maintain the momentum and to ensure that the measures which have been decided do not remain empty promises and that here, in Geneva, as elsewhere, they will lead to action without delay. The statement just made by the head of the American delegation, Mr. Holum, is rather encouraging in this respect.

Having said this, despite the legitimate euphoria we enjoyed on the last day of the Conference, we were aware that all had not been said and much remained to be done. We knew that while we had achieved unexpected compromises and progress which in some respects had surprised us, some obstacles we had skilfully circumvented had not disappeared and that the differences that prevented the adoption of a programme of work until the Conference on Disarmament would persist as they seemed irreconcilable.

We felt all the more justified in thinking so as we were aware that the Review Conference did not have the mission or the ambition of settling all nuclear disarmament problems.

Now that we have seen a temporary respite which goes back to the deployment by the United States of an anti-missile defence system and that the recently heightened tension has abated somewhat, we hope that we will all be able to seek the necessary compromise.

In this connection, my delegation would like to recall the statement we made on behalf of the Group of 21 last week at the Conference on Disarmament regretting the fact that the latter, as the only forum for multilateral negotiation in disarmament matters, is still unable to agree on a programme of work because of the intransigent position of certain nuclear States concerning matters of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We had also stressed that nuclear disarmament remained the priority for the Conference and that we had to establish a special committee on nuclear disarmament. We had also indicated that the use of outer space, being the heritage of all mankind, must not be used for military purposes and called upon the States parties to the ABM Treaty to respect their commitments.

In our opinion, the positive results achieved at the NPT Conference should facilitate the commencement of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament for the drafting of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty to ban the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices. That should be done on the basis of the report of the Special

Coordinator and his mandate, and should be followed by guarantees as to the non-use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances against all other States that do not possess nuclear weapons, through a legal instrument to which all nuclear Powers would be bound.

Along the same lines, it should be recalled that in order to end the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, Algeria made concrete proposals on 30 July 1999 at Geneva to set up a special committee on disarmament and a committee on banning the production of fissile materials for weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. In our opinion, those proposals are still fully relevant and merit being reviewed again.

All this said, not everything on the disarmament front is bleak. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which has been signed by over 155 countries, continues to receive ratifications and is steadily nearing the number of ratifications necessary to enter into force. I would like to recall on this occasion the fact that my country intends to ratify that Treaty as soon as possible.

We are similarly pleased by the fact that the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok cover over 100 countries today. In this connection, my delegation would like to welcome the efforts made by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, as well the efforts of Mongolia, which has declared itself free of nuclear weapons. We hope that areas at risk, such as the Middle East and South Asia, will also become nuclear-weapon-free zones.

From that perspective, and because of the proximity and close ties between Africa and the Middle East, we cannot but express our serious concern about the lack of progress on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In that regard, Algeria fully supports the position taken by States parties at the last NPT Review Conference calling upon Israel to adhere to the NPT and to place its nuclear installations under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Finally, I would like to express our support for the proposal made by the Secretary-General to convene an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers. We would also like to express our frustration at the lack of agreement on the objectives of, and the agenda for, the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

In a world that is striving to achieve a qualitative shift in international relations, while at the same time scientific and technological progress are continually strengthening mankind's power over nature, the atom must henceforth become solely a positive factor for well-being. No obstacle should be placed in the path of promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for economic development.

Having taken account of its basic options, Algeria has chosen to pursue research on the peaceful use of nuclear energy in various socio-economic activities. The quality and level of relations Algeria has developed in recent years with the IAEA with regard to placing its two research and isotope-producing nuclear reactors under its safeguards, and with regard to technical cooperation and assistance, clearly demonstrate my country's determined commitment to the Agency's objectives and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

In the area of disarmament, Algeria — the country that, in its geographical area, devotes the smallest part of its gross domestic product to national defence expenditures — fully supports the basic option of ensuring the security of all States. Promoting that security necessarily includes, first, achieving nuclear disarmament; secondly, the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction; and, lastly, the balanced and gradual reduction of conventional weapons at both the regional and global levels.

At the same time, we believe that conventional weapons should, as much as other types of arms, command the attention of the international community. This is particularly so because the illicit trade in those arms supplies terrorist networks whose objectives are to destabilize States, threaten the values of democracy and terrorize civilian populations. It is for that reason that my delegation has from the outset made constructive proposals and played an active role in the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which is to be held in 2001. My delegation would like to recall here the scope of that Conference as defined by resolution 54/54 V, which was adopted at the previous session of the General

Assembly. We would also like to express our support for Ambassador Santos of Mozambique. We hope that the consultations we will hold outside the work of the First Committee will be successful so that we can begin the second session in January 2001 with optimal conditions for success.

The concept of international security that has prevailed to date, according to which the centre enjoys economic prosperity while the periphery experiences economic uncertainty, instability and insecurity, has revealed all its shortcomings because of the many uncertainties and dangers it entails. It therefore seems to us imperative to re-examine the issue of security through a multidimensional approach in which the military aspect is considered in tandem with other priorities, particularly those related to economic and social development. Such an approach would comprehensively and simultaneously include all the new challenges and transnational threats facing the international community.

With regard to its own geographic area, Algeria would like to call for a comprehensive and integrated approach to security and development that favours dialogue and agreement in the resolution of conflicts. In the Arab Maghreb, Algeria has supported the United Nations/Organization of African Unity (OAU) Settlement Plan and the Houston agreements accepted by Morocco and the POLISARIO Front to make it possible for the Sahrawi people to exercise their right to self-determination through a referendum that is free, devoid of irregularities and in no way constrained.

As both the current Chairman of the OAU and as an African State, we have devoted our attention to the settlement of conflict in Africa so that the continent may devote the meagre resources at it disposal to development and reconstruction.

Algeria is working to create an area of solidarity in the Mediterranean region that meets the aspirations of the peoples on both its shores. The mechanisms for coordination and dialogue set up through the Barcelona 5+5 process and the Mediterranean Forum have opened up new prospects for the promotion of an overall permanent framework for peace, prosperity and mutually beneficial cooperation. Algeria will continue to support all initiatives that promote a Euro-Mediterranean partnership for the benefit of the peoples of both shores.

The Barcelona process, which began two years ago, aims to promote a renewed Mediterranean order, with a view to consolidating stability and prosperity, encouraging the democratic processes and economic reforms undertaken by many countries of the region, and achieving a genuine partnership based on a balance of interests and on respect for differences. It is in this framework that we would like once again to submit a draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region".

We believe that, as the First Committee begins its work, it must continue to focus its attention on the disarmament and international security issues that are on its agenda. It must do so, however, while attempting to rationalize its work. Although we have made progress in this direction, our efforts must be geared to achieving even better results. On our part, we are willing to give positive consideration to any proposal to that end and in particular to the possibility, if we have general agreement, of submitting our proposals and draft resolutions on a biennial basis.

The question of the thematic debate, whose usefulness has yet to be proved in the light of the proceedings of recent sessions, deserves to be reviewed, as it must focus on draft resolutions and not lead to a repetition of the general debate.

The final aspect my delegation would like to emphasize has to do with the composition of the expert groups set up to consider a number of issues. Too often many countries are excluded from these groups, while others have constant representation therein. The selection process should be reviewed, especially when issues of disarmament and international security are at stake. All States are equally concerned and interested. No one country is more interested than another. We hope that the Department for Disarmament Affairs will remedy the situation by ensuring that the criterion of equitable representation does not become one of permanent representation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me first of all, Sir, to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election to these positions, and we wish you every success in your work. We are also pleased to welcome here the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dhanapala, and his colleagues. We feel certain that all delegations, with the assistance of the Secretariat, will do their utmost to ensure that

under your leadership the work of the First Committee will prove successful.

The current session of the General Assembly, inaugurated by the leaders of Member States, has set a high standard of responsibility. The President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, stated at the Millennium Summit:

> "The new century of the United Nations must become, and must go down in history as, a period of real disarmament." (*A/55/PV.3*)

It should also evolve, he added, into a millennium of effective stability. To a large extent, this will depend upon the decisions which will be taken in multilateral forums, including in the First Committee.

Previous speakers have already pointed out, with good reason, a certain contradiction inherent in the present stage of the disarmament process. Two opposite trends are evident. One is aimed at reducing strategic nuclear arms while preserving and strengthening the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty as a cornerstone of strategic stability; preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and furthering the development of disarmament mechanisms as an important and integral part of the overall structure of international security. The other trend is aimed at a revision of everything that has been achieved in the sphere of arms limitation and reduction, primarily as concerns strategic weapons; the erosion of the non-proliferation foundation; the rejection of cooperative efforts to maintain international security; and the imposition of the primacy of exclusiveness and military force.

The Russian Federation is in favour of the first option. Accordingly, Russia is fulfilling, and intends to continue to fulfil consistently, its obligations in the area of the reduction and elimination of weapons of mass destruction, conventional armaments, the implementation of confidence-building measures, and the promotion of the establishment of zones free of weapons of mass destruction. Russia has ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We hope that those States whose ratification is needed for its entry into force will also speed up their ratification process, paving the way for this most important Treaty to become effective.

Russia has ratified START II as well as a package of agreements on START and ABM, signed in New York in 1997. These agreements provide for more than halving the Russian and American strategic arsenals. The entry into force of START II and the implementation of these drastic reductions in strategic offensive weapons depend now on the ratification by the United States of the Treaty and the New York package of agreements.

Russia is prepared to further reduce its nuclear weapons on a bilateral basis with the United States, as well as on a multilateral basis with other nuclear-weapon States. Clearly, this will be possible only if the strategic arms balance is preserved, as a guarantee against the return to global power confrontation and an arms race, and if the 1972 ABM Treaty is preserved and strengthened.

At the same time, we suggest moving to even more drastic reductions of strategic warheads than those earlier agreed upon by the Russian and United States Presidents — down to 1,500 pieces instead of 2,000 to 2,500. An agreement on such additional reductions would accord with the expectations of the peoples of the world and with the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

In July 2000, at the Okinawa Summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin presented to United States President Bill Clinton detailed proposals on the main directions of the START III talks. We see no obstacles to the immediate commencement of such talks.

It is clear that our Committee cannot ignore the problem of the ABM Treaty, for the threat of its collapse, along with the potential destruction of the entire system of major disarmament agreements, is of concern today to the international community. President Clinton's decision not to commit himself to the deployment of a national missile defence system was viewed in Russia as a thoughtful and responsible step. However, the fact is that that same decision also provides for an accelerated development of national missile defence. That programme is being carried out at full speed, and testing is continuing.

We believe that the General Assembly should, as it did last year, pronounce itself in support of the ABM Treaty. The issue of preserving its viability cannot be a matter between Russia and the United States alone. This is an issue of concern to all States interested in strengthening security on our planet.

We intend to introduce shortly a draft resolution in support of the ABM Treaty. Its text is nearly identical to that of last year's resolution.

The adoption of that draft resolution should be another signal for the international community to mobilize in favour of preserving and strengthening strategic stability and of reaffirming the inadmissibility of undermining the process of non-proliferation and disarmament. We are counting on broad support for our draft resolution.

The Russian delegation considers as another important direction of the First Committee's work discussions on issues of information security and on steps to counter the use of scientific and technical developments for purposes inconsistent with universal progress and the task of preserving world peace. Aware of the full importance of addressing these crucial problems, Russia will present for consideration a draft resolution entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security". We are prepared to cooperate with all countries and hope that the Russian draft, as in previous years, will be adopted by consensus.

In his address to the Millennium Summit President Putin put forward two important initiatives. Russia proposed to work out and implement, with the participation of the International Atomic Energy Agency, an international project that would allow the phasing-out of the use of weapons-grade material — enriched uranium and pure plutonium — in civil nuclear power production. The aim would be to create a new nuclear energy cycle designed to resolve, in a radical way, the problems of nuclear non-proliferation, ensure sustainable development and considerably improve the global environment. At the Millennium Summit we distributed a special document explaining this initiative, and we hope for a substantive discussion of the issue, including a discussion within the framework of the debate that began in Vienna.

Since humankind is becoming increasingly active in exploring outer space, the task of preventing the militarization of outer space is becoming even more crucial. In this regard, Russia proposes the convening in Moscow, in spring 2001, under the auspices of the United Nations, an international conference on the prevention of the militarization of outer space. Its objective would be to draw the attention of the international community to this problem with a view to preventing, through joint efforts, before it is too late, the spread of the arms race into outer space. The catastrophic consequences of such a development are difficult for even the writers of science fiction to imagine.

Our proposal is not directed against the interests of any State and would not hamper the peaceful exploration of outer space. The fact that weapons of any kind have not yet been deployed in outer space emphasizes the pragmatic character and increases the feasibility of the Russian initiative. Russia has consistently proposed the establishment in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee on the prevention of the arms race in outer space, with the aim of working out specific practical arrangements to prevent outer space being turned into a new arena for armed confrontation.

We count on the broad support of the international community for the Russian initiatives and hope that they will be implemented as a result of the joint efforts of States.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that it is our profound conviction that the great potential of the Conference on Disarmament is far from being fully utilized. We strongly favour giving a new, joint impetus to the activities of this unique forum. That would undoubtedly serve the interests of disarmament.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on your election to guide the Committee's work. We are sure that your broad experience will enable us to achieve success in our work at this session. I also thank your predecessor, Ambassador Raimundo González of Chile, for his excellent work in guiding the Committee last year.

The excessive accumulation and circulation of small arms in the world have serious and well-known consequences. Their improper use leads to, among other phenomena, an increase in violent crime, domestic violence, suicide and murder when the weapons are introduced illegally into a country such as Colombia, and thus remain beyond the control of the State, in the hands of people outside the law. However, the consequences can be even more serious, because they can extend beyond issues of national security and affect regional and international security.

The fight against those who traffic in weapons is one of the priorities of the Government of Colombia. National authorities are constantly carrying out operations in different parts of our territory to dismantle groups of weapons traffickers, many of which belong to international networks.

Many small arms circulating in countries that have overcome armed confrontation make their way to Colombia through secret, illegal channels. This is a trend that must be halted, with respect not only to Colombia but to any other country that is affected by conflict, by taking actions to prevent traffickers and criminals from gaining access to these weapons. Otherwise, the weapons in circulation will continue to be used in this illegal trade or as currency in exchange for drugs or other illegal products.

The development of collective strategies to combat the illicit traffic in small arms also means that we should keep in mind that the demand for illegal weapons is generated by groups or individuals outside the law who, attempting to subvert the constitutional order and to spread violence to achieve their objectives, turn to the black market to obtain weapons that are forbidden by the laws of the countries where they operate. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the illicit supply of weapons is provided by merchants who, taking advantage of lax controls, or an absence of control, on the production, distribution and sale of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, profit from the death and misery arising from the illicit traffic in these weapons.

As part of the illicit traffic in weapons is rooted in an underground economy that includes a group of international black markets supported by their own sources of supply, communication and distribution networks and financial systems, it is clear that the fight against this scourge will require us to draw up international cooperation agreements on these aspects of the problem.

As one of the countries most affected by illicit arms-trafficking, Colombia is participating in the process under way in Vienna to negotiate a protocol to combat such trafficking. However, Colombia believes that an international instrument to prevent and, ultimately, eradicate this illicit traffic should focus mainly on measures that would guarantee the legitimacy of any trade in weapons and prevent its being diverted to illicit channels.

Since Colombia announced to the General Assembly the initiative to convene an international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, and the Assembly approved it through resolution 46/36 H of 1991, the initiative has been kept alive, particularly by the countries affected by this scourge. Seven years later, with the adoption of resolution 53/77 E, the General Assembly decided to hold such a conference in 2001. Colombia is confident that the Conference will provide an opportunity to involve the international community in resolving a problem — the illicit traffic in weapons — whose resolution cannot be delayed.

With regard to mines, I should like to inform the Committee that on 6 March 2000 Colombia ratified the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, as well as its four Protocols. Furthermore, we ratified the Convention on the prohibition of antipersonnel landmines — the Ottawa Convention — on 6 September 2000, in the framework of the Millennium Summit.

Antipersonnel mines continue, with increasing frequency and always with terrifying effects, to touch the lives of many Colombians. As a State party to the Ottawa Convention, Colombia is determined, in the words of the first paragraph of the Preamble to the Convention, to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines that kill or maim hundreds of people every week, mostly innocent and defenceless civilians and especially children, obstruct economic and social development, inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and have other severe consequences even many years after emplacement.

In the process of ratifying the Ottawa Convention, my Government bore in mind the moral and humanitarian responsibility that it bears to protect the population of Colombia from the indiscriminate effects of anti-personnel mines, as well as the needs of the Colombians. We Colombians are very familiar with the tragedy represented by thousands of mines in our territory. It is therefore necessary to start removing the mines and to assist victims who have been injured by them in our armed conflict. In this connection, we are developing programmes to provide these victims with assistance for their rehabilitation and reintegration into social and economic life. We hope to continue this

work with the generous assistance of the international community such as that given us by the Canadian Government.

The conflict that we are experiencing has led the Government to formulate an overall strategy known as the Colombia Plan. This Plan has, as its central element, the political settlement of armed conflict and it also comprises a strategy against drug-trafficking, as well as complementary strategies of economic and social recovery and the institutional strengthening and protection of human rights. The Colombia Plan is an overall strategy formulated with the final objective of achieving peace as a result of strengthening the State in order to allow it to fulfil its responsibilities. In order to achieve these objectives, the Government has requested international cooperation based upon the principle of combined responsibility in the fight against drug-trafficking and, also, on international support for the peace process.

Colombia is one of the 44 States for which the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is required for its entry into force. My country signed the CTBT and the ratification process is under way in parliament. With respect to the provisional Technical Secretariat of the international Organization of the Treaty, among the reasons Colombia has to encourage prompt ratification of the Treaty, is that of overcoming the obstacle that, according to our legislation, prevents the payments of fees to the Preparatory Commission until the legislation approving the Treaty is adopted.

We also participate in the seismological net which will be part of the international system of verification of the CTBT with our seismological station located at El Rosal near the country's capital.

And, in conclusion, with the ratification of the Ottawa Convention and of the Chemical Weapons Convention last April, and once the legislative process is completed for the ratification of the CTBT, Colombia will be part of all of the more important and most multilateral agreements on disarmament and arms control. With this we reaffirm our commitment to disarmament and to the search for a safer world, a world at peace that we can leave to future generations with a clear conscience.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. Chairman, I should like first of all to congratulate you on your brilliant election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and to assure you, as well as the other members of the Bureau, of the full cooperation of my delegation in the fulfilment of your eminent task.

I wish also to take this opportunity to pay a tribute to Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General, and his colleagues for the competence and devotion which they constantly display in the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

Since the creation of the United Nations, questions of disarmament have occupied a central place in its collective security system and the Organization and is progressively establishing an order to preserve future generations from the scourge of war.

To this end, it must be stated that impressive progress has been attained during the last two decades in favour of general and complete disarmament duly verified through the constantly renewed collective commitment to a world of peace, security and stability.

It must, however, be recognized that in spite of huge progress, we must not lose sight of the fact that much still remains to be done in the implementation of the ideal in disarmament.

In the area of so-called conventional weapons, it is the small arms and light weapons in particular which continue to constitute a true scourge, not only because of the enormous suffering they inflict upon civilian populations but, above all, because through their proliferation they intensify conflicts, encourage terrorist acts and trafficking of all kinds and, at the same time, complicate the application of policies for the consolidation of peace and post-conflict national reconstruction.

It is Africa which is paying a heavy toll with the proliferation and uncontrolled circulation of small arms which are an ongoing source of destabilization among the States of the continent.

This is why Senegal shares the view of many countries regarding the absolute priority which needs to be given to the strategies and policies designed to fight the circulation of these weapons and to eliminate their illicit trafficking.

Thus, together with the member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), my country is firmly resolved to seek a regional solution to this scourge.

The political will, as well as concerted action taken in the subregion, have allowed a specific achievement with the adoption, on 31 October 1998, in Abuja, Nigeria, by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, of a moratorium on the manufacture, import and export of small arms in West Africa.

This moratorium, which entered into force on 1 November 1988, was expanded and strengthened through the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development designed to create the necessary synergies between the urgent need for security and stability and the need for harmonious economic and social development.

The long-term objective of this programme is to establish a real culture of peace and security in our subregion.

The flame of peace ceremony which took place on 25 September last at Agadez in Niger, constitutes, following those of Mali and Liberia, a perfect illustration of the will on the part of the States of ECOWAS to fight and eliminate the proliferation and accumulation of small arms on their territory.

Very fortunately, these actions of the countries of our subregion are not isolated. They are part and parcel of the broad international campaign to halt the accumulation, circulation and illicit use of light weapons.

In Africa, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), meeting in Algiers in July 1999, adopted concrete and responsible decisions to take up the sensitive question of the proliferation and illicit circulation of these weapons. It was in implementation of these decisions that the General Secretariat of the OAU organized the first continental meeting of African experts in Addis Ababa, from 17 to 19 May 2000, with the participation of the United Nations and representatives of the Governments of Sweden, the Netherlands and Switzerland. This meeting sought to prepare the convening of a ministerial conference to identify a common African approach in anticipation of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

It must be stressed that the need to protect Africa from this scourge extends far beyond the borders of the continent, which, we must recall, does not produce weapons. The entire international community, especially the producer countries, is called on to carry out sustained and coordinated international action to resolve all aspects linked to the proliferation of and illicit trade in light weapons. In this context, we welcome the initiatives undertaken to that end in Latin America and within the European Union.

Clearly, none of these actions and initiatives, no matter how relevant, can attain its objectives unless they are harmonized by the United Nations organs primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security.

In September 1999, the Security Council undertook a very edifying debate on this question and noted that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a destabilizing factor that undermines the sound implementation of peace accords, complicates activities to consolidate peace and obstructs policies for economic and social development.

The relevance of this diagnosis demonstrates the great importance that should be attached to the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Preparatory Committee for the Conference, meeting here in New York in its first session from 28 February to 3 March, convinced us of the urgency of finding appropriate responses to this issue.

Like other countries, Senegal feels that international action against the proliferation of small arms should aim at strengthening the rules and regulations pertaining to the transfer of weapons; at achieving greater transparency of commercial transactions and brokerage activities; and at ensuring more decisive cooperation in the implementation of regional and national programmes for the collection and destruction of these weapons.

In seeking to achieve these objectives, the Conference should ultimately adopt a programme of action containing provisions that are not only political, but also legally binding, while recognizing that, necessary though they may be, measures to control the production, stockpiling and transfer of small arms must in no way prejudice the sovereign right of States to legitimate self-defence, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

It will have been noted that the problem of the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms is a

source of major concern to my country, Senegal. The issue of anti-personnel mines is another. The March 1999 entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was undoubtedly an important phase in the efforts of the international community on behalf of disarmament and the total elimination of those devastating weapons, a true scourge of our times. We must now, however, work further for the practical implementation of the relevant provisions of that important international legal instrument.

In this context, we welcome the outcome of the Second Meeting of the States Parties, held in Geneva from 11 to 15 September, especially in the framework of demining, which could benefit from more substantial financial, material and technical resources. Similarly, the publication on 7 September of the "Landmine Monitor Report 2000" was a source of satisfaction, especially inasmuch as it confirms the dramatic decline in the production of these tools of death, the accelerated destruction of stockpiles and an almost total halt of trade in these weapons since the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention.

My country also attaches special importance to the achievement of our common objective of general, complete and verified nuclear disarmament. Moreover, great progress has been achieved in the past decade in the reduction, elimination and non-proliferation of these weapons of mass destruction. This progress includes the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; and the signing by a vast majority of countries of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We feel that all these achievements undoubtedly represent important steps in the right direction.

In addition, there were positive developments at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), relating, inter alia, to the unconditional commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to proceed towards the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. We owed this breakthrough to the perspicacity and negotiating talents of the President of the Conference, my friend Ambassador Baali of Algeria. Once again, I offer him my delegation's congratulations on this significant achievement, which has strengthened the NPT as a cornerstone of the world non-proliferation regime.

We should also welcome the recent decisions of the Russian Duma to allow the ratifications of START II and of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. I hope that this will contribute to new initiatives in nuclear disarmament.

In spite of these achievements, we still have a long way to go towards the achievement of complete nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Indeed, in summarizing negotiations on disarmament and nuclear arms control, we are compelled to recognize a certain paralysis, or even a loss of ground, over the past two years. Obviously, this situation raises the issue of how to pursue the momentum we have created over the past five years.

Opening the work of the sixth NPT Review Conference on 24 April, Secretary-General Kofi Annan echoed the concerns aroused by the anti-missile defence shield and its consequences for the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems. He said:

> "The most recent challenge facing us in the area of nuclear disarmament [is] the growing pressure to deploy national missile defences."

As we see it, efforts in nuclear disarmament should aim above all at avoiding the causes of competition between the nuclear Powers.

In addition to this concern of the international community there is the problem of the stagnation of the Conference on Disarmament, of which my country is a member. In effect, for more than three years now this unique authority in the field of nuclear disarmament has found itself paralysed by vain considerations that have little to do with its established reputation for efficacy and its tradition of working in a spirit of consensus.

This deplorable situation has made it impossible to continue negotiations on a so-called cut-off convention to stop the production of fissile materials for military uses. These negotiations began in 1998.

My delegation would like to once again call on the members of this Conference to consult in a dispassionate manner and restore a climate of confidence. Such a climate is the only means of succeeding in such a massive task as the joint achievement of a total, verifiable and universal elimination of nuclear weapons.

For more than 50 years we have been engaged as a community of nations in working together to reduce and completely eliminate nuclear weapons, and we must persist in these efforts because not only would nuclear disarmament make a significant contribution to ushering in an era of global peace and security, but so would economic and social development. In fact, as people continue to say, disarmament is essential for the prevention of conflicts in many of the developing countries. And conflicts are assuredly development's worst enemies. Furthermore, vast wealth is tied up in the arms race — to the detriment of sustainable-development policies. Today it is our duty to rectify this situation and to see to it that, at the dawn of the new millennium, with the help of the dividends of disarmament, the development of nations is given our best attention.

Mr. Valdés (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Chile has a pragmatic policy and stands ready to support new approaches. We believe therefore that it is essential that the work of the First Committee be geared towards the achievement of a number of objectives capable of promoting greater confidence in the mechanisms of disarmament and of helping to define new concepts of international security.

In line with this perspective, we believe that the idea of human security represents an approach that renews and enriches our task, in that it constitutes a people-centred conceptual framework. In addition to underscoring the role of humanitarian law and human rights as fundamental pillars for its development, the idea of human security also gives added impetus to, inter alia, efforts to bring about a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines, the protection of civilians during armed conflicts and the prevention of illicit trafficking in small arms.

We therefore fully support the convening in 2001 of an international conference on trafficking in small arms in all its aspects, as part of an effort to encourage a truly global approach that could reduce the negative impact of the proliferation of small arms. In order to achieve this objective, we believe it important to involve civil society, including the private sector. It is important for the conference to have a successful outcome in order to reduce the risks faced by the persons who are most threatened by these arms — particularly children, who are frequently recruited as soldiers in various conflicts around the world. This problem was clearly and tragically depicted in a survey by the United Nations Children's Fund, which revealed that in the last decade 2 million children have died as a direct result of armed conflicts and 6 million children have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. It is encouraging to note that some progress is being made in this area, including the emergence of innovative ideas such as the "arms for development" and "arms for food" programmes, as well as practical disarmament measures in some communities.

Given the continuing impasse that is blocking the work of the Conference on Disarmament, we believe it is of the utmost importance that efforts on behalf of non-proliferation and disarmament should be intensified. Moreover, given the absence of political will to make genuinely meaningful progress in these areas, we continue to support fully the initiative undertaken by the coalition supporting a "new agenda" to include elements for a debate that more accurately reflects our contemporary realities.

We wish to draw attention, nevertheless, to the outcome of the most recent Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in particular to the unambiguous commitment given at that Conference by the nuclear-weapon States to work towards the complete elimination of their nuclear arsenals. This commitment must be translated without delay into a process of negotiation, and practical measures to move gradually and systematically towards this objective need to implemented. We believe it is important to emphasize that the actions and rights that emanate from the Treaty constitute for all the parties a clear programme of action aimed at bringing about the complete elimination of these weapons. We cannot continue to accept an international order in which a small group of States continue to have the right to possess nuclear weapons and the vast majority lack this right.

It is for this reason and because of Chile's unwavering commitment to international law that we wish to insist once again on the validity of the findings contained in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice in which the Court underscored the obligation to enter into and conclude good faith negotiations on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict international control. That Advisory Opinion constitutes a solid doctrinal base which must not be ignored.

In reviewing the elements of the Court's Advisory Opinion, it is clear that — because the devastating and wide-ranging effects of the use of nuclear weapons cause incalculable damage to mankind — the Advisory Opinion links questions concerning disarmament law and humanitarian law. Furthermore, according to international law — inter alia, the provisions of Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations — the international community has a peremptory obligation to maintain peace and security, and to meet this obligation any use or threat of use of such arms must be prohibited.

In this regard, we believe that the mere possession of nuclear weapons in situations of intense hostility can give rise to what constitutes a threat of the use of force, which is prohibited by Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, and by articles 52 and 53 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which deal with the threat or use of force and treaties conflicting with a peremptory norm of international law that cannot be derogated.

Chile is of the view that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice constitutes an essential conceptual framework that will open new paths to cooperation based on trust, rather than on the threat of a confrontation that would have catastrophic consequences for humanity. We believe, moreover, that in the future it would be useful to have recourse to the International Court of Justice on matters of similar importance.

An important framework for achieving progress in the field of nuclear disarmament and in the elimination of other types of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems is dialogue and negotiation between the nuclear Powers themselves. We welcomed with satisfaction the recent progress made on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II, but apart from that and from the progress achieved in a few other areas, the prevailing situation is on the whole not very encouraging. We note the exhaustion of successive formulas and ideas, however imaginative they may be, that would help to ensure an effective negotiating process even on some of the most urgent issues on the international disarmament agenda.

The cornerstone of the disarmament process, whose ultimate aim is the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, relies on a level of stability that guarantees the relative security of the different international actors. In other words, this balance depends on the degree of mutual confidence between the principal nuclear powers, given the concrete possibilities and limitations of missile systems, that in turn create the environment for the use of these weapons. The possibility of alterations to this basic relation, together with the existence of other unresolved conflicts, is a threat to the foundations of the architecture of non-proliferation.

In connection with the non-proliferation regime, I have the honour to announce that on 12 July, Chile deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations its instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, thereby becoming to date the sixtieth country to ratify the Treaty and the thirtieth of the 44 States required for its entry into force. We therefore launch an appeal to all those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty. We also appeal to all States to observe a moratorium on testing through nuclear explosions until the Treaty enters into force.

We have followed with particular interest the historic talks that took place last June between the Governments of the North and South of the Korean peninsula. We believe that this development is not accidental but rather the fruit of, among other things, the support of the international community. As a member country of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, we believe it is appropriate to highlight the role that this international organization has played in promoting lasting peace in the peninsula. There is no doubt that it has demonstrated its effectiveness by contributing to the establishment of non-proliferation norms, promoting stability and regional peace, becoming a confidence-building mechanism and serving as an example of preventive diplomacy.

With regard to the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which was approved in successive resolutions of the General Assembly, we wish to reaffirm our support for the position which the Non-Aligned Movement countries have adopted on this matter. We believe that it is necessary to quickly achieve consensus in order to give it a substantive content that would reflect the fundamental changes that have taken place on the international scene since the convening of the last special session of the Assembly as well as the progress that has been achieved in the field of disarmament. We must also give due consideration to emerging issues. The Assembly should also pay special attention to new proposals and we therefore intend to continue to strive for the broadest possible participation by non-governmental organizations active in the field of disarmament and welcome at the same time the creative contributions that they continue to make.

In connection with the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the vital importance of security in the international maritime transport of radioactive waste is quite evident. Chile has been among those countries that have worked to keep this concern alive in many different forums. We welcome among other achievements the fact that in its report on nuclear-weapon-free zones the Disarmament Commission recognized the cooperation to which such zones can give rise in the application of the norms that govern the international transport of these substances.

Similarly and more recently, we note that the Final Document of the last NPT Review Conference highlighted the importance of the security factor in the international transport of radioactive materials. We therefore reiterate in this forum the need to continue to adopt measures to regulate international maritime transport based on the highest levels of security applicable and thus to ensure the safety of people and the corresponding ecosystems and natural resources. We believe that the doctrine of the abuse of rights, when engaged in highly dangerous activities, and the system of objective responsibility constitute a good doctrinal base for arriving at equitable solutions to problems in this area. In short and because of the incalculable risks associated with operations of this nature, this is a topic that affects the international community as a whole and should not be of concern only to coastal and island States.

As further evidence of the importance which Chile attaches to this issue, we are sponsoring the organization of a seminar on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which will be held in 2001 at the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Lima.

In this regard and in conclusion, we wish to draw attention to the work of the Regional Centre, which shortly after its revival has prepared an intensive programme of activities to promote peace and security, and to the role which the Centre has played in the policy that Chile has been promoting in the region for the creation of a climate of confidence-building measures. We also wish to underscore our commitment to the Centre, which is evident now, as it was during the process of its reactivation, in our financial contributions to its operation.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Chile for his kind words addressed to the Chair.

That completes the list of speakers for this afternoon.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.